

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L KABUL 4620

DEPT PASS AID FOR NE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EAID, AF, US
SUBJECT: U.S. ASSISTANCE TO AFGHANISTAN: MEETING WITH MINISTER
OF WATER AND POWER, PROF. MOHAMMAD MANSUR HASHIMI

1. SUMMARY: I MADE MY INITIAL CALL ON THE NEW MINISTER
OF WATER AND POWER, PROF. HASHIMI, ON JUNE 5, ACCOMPANIED
BY THE USAID DIRECTOR AND THE EMBASSY ECON COUNSELLOR.
WITH THE MINISTER WERE THE NEW PRESIDENTS OF HELMAND CONSTRUC-
TION CO. (HCC), AND HELMAND-ARGHANDAB VALLEY AUTHORITY (HAVA).
THE MINISTER SAID HE HOPED THE U.S. WOULD REMAIN AND
EXPAND ITS ACTIVITIES IN THE HELMAND VALLEY; REQUESTED
QUICK AID APPROVAL OF THE CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT FOR
HCC UNDER THE CURRENT PROJECT; AND SAID THAT HE WOULD BE RESPONS-
IBLE FOR HAVA AT LEAST FOR THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE. END SUMMARY.

2. ACCOMPANIED BY USAID DIRECTOR AND EMBASSY ECON
COUNSELLOR, I MADE MY INITIAL CALL ON THE NEW MINISTER FOR
WATER AND POWER, PROF. MOHAMMAD MANSUR HASHIMI, AT HIS
OFFICE JUNE 5. WITH HIM WERE THE NEW PRESIDENT OF HAVA,
ENGINEER ABDUR RASHID AYYUBI, AND THE NEW PRESIDENT OF HCC,
ENGINEER JUMA KHAN BARAKZAI. IT WAS EVIDENT FROM THE BEGINNING
THAT HASHIMI WAS READY FOR SUBSTANTIVE DISCUSSIONS, IN CON-
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TRAST TO MOST OF THE MINISTERS I HAVE SEEN SO FAR.

3. AFTER A BRIEF EXCHANGE OF PLEASANTRIES, AND A SHORT
STATEMENT BY HASHIMI ON THE MEANING OF THE REVOLUTION
ALONG STANDARD LINES ("THIS WAS A REVOLUTION OF AND FOR
THE PEOPLE; THE GOVERNMENT IS THE SERVANT NOT THE MASTER OF
THE PEOPLE; WE WANT YOUR AID WITHOUT CONDITIONS"), THE

MINISTER TURNED THE CONVERSATION IMMEDIATELY TO THE HELMAND VALLEY. WITH THE ENGINEERS DOING MOST OF THE TALKING, THE AFGHANS BEGAN BY STRESSING THE NEED FOR CONTINUATION OF U.S. COMMITMENT TO THE PROJECT. "YOU ARE THE BIGGEST COUNTRY, THE HELMAND IS OUR BIGGEST PROJECT. YOU STARTED IT AND WE HOPE YOU ARE GOING TO FINISH IT". THEY SAID THAT THE CRITICAL NEED AT THE PRESENT TIME WAS FOR THE APPROXIMATELY SEVEN MILLION DOLLARS OF CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT FOR HCC. "IF YOU CAN'T GET IT TO US, JUST GIVE US THE MONEY AND WE'LL GET IT ELSEWHERE."

4. WE EXPLAINED THAT WE REALIZE EQUIPMENT WAS, AND IS, A PROBLEM. UNDER THE PROJECT AGREEMENT, HOWEVER, HCC HAD SPECIFICALLY AGREED TO MAKE AVAILABLE EQUIPMENT TO ACCOMPLISH THE WORK DURING THE INTERIM PERIOD BEFORE THE PROCUREMENT AND ARRIVAL OF THE NEW AID FUNDED EQUIPMENT. WE ALSO POINTED

OUT THAT THERE ARE OTHER SERIOUS IMPLEMENTATION PROBLEMS WHICH HAVE PUT US MORE THAN A YEAR BEHIND SCHEDULE. MOST IMPORTANT ARE THE LACK OF CLARITY CONCERNING HAVA'S AUTHORITY AND OUR INABILITY, TO DATE, TO WORK OUT SATISFACTORY ARRANGEMENTS FOR CONSTRUCTION OF ON-FARM DRAINS BY HAND LABOR. PERHAPS TO SAVE FACE WITH HIS MINISTER, RASHID COUNTERED THAT HAVA WAS NOT, IN FACT, BEHIND AND THAT FARM DRAINS HAD BEEN CONSTRUCTED WHERE MAIN DRAINS WERE IN PLACE -- AND FARM DRAINS MADE NO SENSE WHERE MAIN DRAINS WERE NOT IN PLACE. CONFIDENTIAL

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5. WE SUGGESTED THAT OUR EXPERTS GET TOGETHER TO RESOLVE THESE ISSUES. THEY MINISTER IMMEDIATELY TOOK UP OUR SUGGESTION AND A MEETING WAS ARRANGED AT HCC FOR WEDNESDAY, JUNE 7.

6. THE MINISTER ALSO SIGNALLED HOPES THAT WE WOULD EXPAND OUR ACTIVITIES IN THE HAVA REGION, CITING NEED FOR FURTHER IRRIGATION DEVELOPMENT IN THE LOWER HELMAND TO CAPITALIZE ON THE EXPANDED CAPACITY OF KAJAKAI RESERVOIR; NEED FOR ADDITIONAL DRAINAGE AND IRRIGATION WORK IN THE ARGHANDAB VALLEY, AND NEED FOR AN ADDITIONAL DAM ON THE ARGHANDAB. I SAID WE WOULD BE PREPARED TO DISCUSS ALL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS, BUT POINTED OUT THAT UNDER THE AID MANDATE, IT IS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT FOR US TO FUND INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS SUCH AS LARGE DAMS, WHICH SHOULD MORE PROPERLY BE DISCUSSED WITH IFI'S SUCH AS THE IBRD AND THE ADB. I ADDED THAT THE U.S. WAS OF COURSE, THE MAJOR CONTRI-

BUTOR TO BOTH THESE ORGANIZATIONS.

7. HAVING HEARD FROM THE MINISTER OF PLANNING ON JUNE 4 THAT RESPONSIBILITY FOR HAVA WAS TO BE TAKEN OVER BY THE

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, I ASKED PROFESSOR HASHIMI WITH WHOM WE SHOULD EXPECT TO DEAL ON HAVA MATTERS IN THE FUTURE. HE REPLIED THAT FOR THE NEAR FUTURE, AT LEAST, HE WOULD BE RESPONSIBLE.

8. COMMENT: IT IS CLEAR THAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT WANTS US TO CONTINUE IN THE HELMAND VALLEY. IT IS LESS CLEAR WHETHER THEY ARE PREPARED TO ACCEPT THE CONDITIONS OF OUR CURRENT AGREEMENT AND THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER IT, PARTICULARLY TO PROVIDE INTERIM CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT. THE EQUIPMENT PROBLEM IS NOT A NEW ONE, BUT THE NEW HCC MANAGEMENT COULD BE EVEN LESS RESPONSIVE THAN THEIR PREDECESSORS. END COMMENT.

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